

1914.
NEW ZEALAND.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, PRISONS BRANCH:
PRISONS BOARD
(ANNUAL REPORT OF) FOR 1913.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

Sir, —
Office of the Prisons Board, Wellington, 16th July, 1914.
I have the honour to forward herewith the report of the Prisons Board for the year 1913.
I have, &c.,
The Hon. the Minister of Justice, Wellington.
ROBERT STOUT.

REPORT.

DURING the year 1913 the Board held seven meetings. The following table shows the dates and places of meeting, and the number of cases considered at each meeting, grouped under their particular class:—

| Cases considered of | | | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|---|---|--------|
| Date. | Place of Meeting. | Habitual Criminals and Offenders. | Persons undergoing Reformative Detention. | Total. |
| February 5 .. | Invercargill | 49 | 125 | 174 |
| February 6 and 7 .. | Dunedin .. | | | |
| February 8 and 10 .. | Hannier .. | | | |
| March 19 .. | Wellington | 3 | 11 | 14 |
| April 19 .. | Wellington | | | |
| April 22 .. | Auckland .. | | | |
| April 24 .. | Kaingaroa | 69 | 72 | |
| April 25 .. | Waipa .. | | | |
| April 29 .. | Waikeria .. | | | |
| May 10 .. | Wellington | 20 | 11 | 31 |
| July 31 .. | Wellington | 73 | 41 | 114 |
| August 2 .. | New Plymouth | | | |
| October 21 .. | Invercargill | | | |
| October 25 .. | Addington | 6 | 74 | 80 |
| October 25 .. | Lyttelton .. | | | |
| November 20 .. | Waikeria .. | | | |
| November 22 .. | Kaingaroa | 6 | 69 | 75 |
| November 25 .. | Waipa .. | | | |
| Totals .. | | 157 | 103 | 560 |

Many of the cases were those of persons who came more than once before the Board. The total number of distinct persons who came under the jurisdiction of the Board as habitual criminals during the year was seventy-one, and the number of distinct persons under reformative detention 229.

HABITUAL CRIMINALS AND OFFENDERS.

The Board recommended thirty-five persons of this class for release on probation, and ten, including five who were already on probation, for absolute discharge. Fifteen of those released on probation broke the conditions of their license, and twelve were returned to prison. The three remaining have not reported themselves, and their present whereabouts is not known. Satisfactory reports of the conduct of twenty released during the year were received. Of those released in 1911 and 1912 twenty broke the terms of their probation, and were thus dealt with: Returned to prison, thirteen; whereabouts unknown, seven. The total number released on probation during the years 1911, 1912, and 1913 was seventy-four, and of these fifteen were convicted of fresh offences, viz.: In 1911, five; in 1912, six; in 1913, four.

PERSONS UNDERGOING REFORMATIVE TREATMENT.

The number of persons under reformative treatment who were recommended for release or discharge by the Board was ninety-nine. As was pointed out in the report for 1912, the Board endeavours to provide for a part of the term of reformative treatment being served out of prison on license, and so far the results of this method have been sufficiently satisfactory to be encouraging. In twenty-six cases the probationary license has been cancelled, five having been found guilty of a specific offence, and twenty-one having committed breaches of the terms of their license.

SPECIAL PRISONS.

Waipa Prison camp is still being maintained for prisoners who have not before been in prison. A few of those under reformative treatment are sent there. The tree-planting and work done by the prisoners is good, and the surroundings are all that can be desired for leading a healthy and an industrious life. At Kaingaroa, the other tree-planting camp in the North Island, where also some prisoners under reformative treatment are sent, good work has also been done, and some prisoners on leaving have been engaged for forestry work elsewhere. At Waikeria the farm has made great progress, and the necessary permanent buildings are being erected by the prisoners. In these three industrial camps the prisoners are doing well and performing valuable work. Their open-air life and strenuous work have had good effect on both their physique and conduct.

The Invercargill Prison has always a large number of prisoners, mostly young men, who have been sentenced to reformative treatment. The work done by the prisoners has been arduous, and has also been valuable to the State, as rich land suitable for agriculture is being reclaimed. The area to be obtained by the Department will be 650 acres. Besides the reclamation of lands, the prisoners have erected buildings, and also made a large number of concrete blocks which have a ready sale.

SAVING HABIT.

The saving habit is being encouraged among the habitual criminals, and many of them have accumulated the whole or part of the small sums granted to them—6d. a day—for industry and good conduct.

FEMALE PRISONERS.

The female prison at Addington has been opened during the year. It is well suited for its purposes. The number of female offenders declared habitual is five, and they were thus dealt with: Released on probation, three; in prison, two. The number of females under reformative treatment is five. Serious crime amongst females is almost unknown in New Zealand. Only twenty were sentenced by the Supreme Court in 1912 and twelve in 1913. There are in all the cities some drunkards and prostitutes who are continually being received into and discharged from the larger prisons, and it seems to us a question requiring grave consideration if some steps should not be taken to detain those who have had many convictions for some long period, and that they should be set to some kind of industrial work beyond the kind of work usually done by female prisoners in prisons.

SKILLED LABOUR FOR PRISONERS.

Up to the present time no systematic endeavour has been made to teach skilled trades to prisoners, and neither the construction nor the equipment of our gaols offer suitable facilities for the training of skilled tradesmen. Apart, however, from this consideration there remains the question of the competition of prison labour with free labour, which is one for the Executive Government to decide. Seeing that the main industries of the Dominion are connected with pastoral and agricultural pursuits, the Prison authorities aim more at turning out handy men competent to do farm-work and able to carry out the rougher kinds of skilled labour that are required on farms. It is hoped that in institutions such as Waikeria and others the prisoners will be trained sufficiently in this direction to ensure them constant employment in the country on their release.

HOW BREACHES OF PROBATIONARY LICENSE ARE DEALT WITH.

Breaches of probationary license are of three classes—(a) Those who whilst on probation commit fresh crimes; (b) those who whilst under prohibition so far as alcohol is concerned frequent publichouses and drink intoxicants; (c) those who do not report their whereabouts to the Probation Officer, and thus prevent the Board and the Department of Justice having a supervision of their actions. It will be seen from the statistics that those under class (b) are the most numerous. The Board has found it necessary in very many cases to make it a condition of release on probation that a prisoner released shall take out a prohibition order under the Licensing Act against himself, and that he shall not visit any place where alcoholic liquors are sold. A great number of prisoners say that their lapses from the path of rectitude have been occasioned by indulging in intoxicating liquors, and in most cases such statements have been verified by the evidence given against them on their trial or in the depositions taken in the Court that committed them for trial or for sentence. It is not surprising that after their release from months or years of imprisonment they should succumb to temptation. The majority have a great burden of past bad habits to carry, and most criminals have not a strong will-power. The prisoners are beginning to understand that any breach of the conditions of their probationary license will make it harder for them to get another trial, and the fear of further imprisonment has in many cases a restraining influence, and helps them to resist temptation. In some cases the Board makes it a condition that towns shall not be visited, and that they shall remain in the country so that they may escape the heavy temptations of city life.

There are many who have been released who have up to the present led good lives, and though it is said that many have not the will-power to resist temptation, and thus again become criminals, the Board realizes that it cannot be expected that any term of imprisonment will redeem the average habitual criminal. He may be tainted with a past history derived from his ancestors, and his early years may have been spent in bad surroundings; and, if so, how can he be expected even after some years of seclusion from the social life of the community to have got rid of his taint? The Board, therefore, in carrying out its duties, does not expect all to be reclaimed. If some can be made good citizens even for a time, and if some are permanently changed, that will be a good result. The Board further recognizes that it must struggle to help all the prisoners and try them with liberty from time to time when there seems even the slightest chance of improvement. To imprison men who seem normal for ever and not allow one ray of hope to enter their souls would be inflicting the most grievous of punishment. Some may be abnormal, and improvement may be impossible, and the safety of the public may demand their permanent seclusion, but this class is, the Board believes, very small.

The Board would further add that if prisoners are to be redeemed the public must treat them with consideration on their release and help them to lead a better life. Prisoners' aid societies have done much in helping them, and it is a pity that these are not better supported, so that the released prisoners may be found work and aided to get work. As was said in last year's report of the Board, nothing can be expected of prisoners if they do not acquire industrious habits and the habit of thrift.

The Board is much impressed with the great value of post-prison treatment. Experience has definitely proved that as a general rule prisoners, including those even not of a pronounced criminal type, are unable to govern themselves properly without some helping and guiding hand to carry them over the dangerous period immediately following their release. Provision has been made for this need in the four centres by the appointment of Probation Officers, who are connected with philanthropic organizations, and whose services are highly valued and recognized by the Board. But with the increasing growth of the number of persons who are sentenced to reformatory treatment it is evident that the system must be considerably extended. The Board recommends that the Department should consider the question of appointing more Probation Officers, and it is believed that there are many suitable persons who would cheerfully undertake these duties.

Signed on behalf of the Board.

ROBERT STOUT, Chairman.

Approximate Cost of Paper.—Preparation, not given; printing (1,500 copies), £2 10s.

By Authority: JOHN MACKAY, Government Printer. Wellington.—1914.

Price 3d.]

